Achievements of Basel Mission in Karnataka

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Summary:

The people of Basel, the headquarters of a German speaking Swiss Canton, took an oath during the Napoleonic Wars that if the town remained unharmed by the Wars, they would start a school to train Christian Missionaries, and accordingly in 1816 the Basel Mission (Protestant) was founded and when the Indian Charter Act of 1833 relaxed the restrictions on the activities of the Christian Missionaries in India, three German-speaking missionaries came to Mangalore via Calicut port in 1834.

These Protestants did not try to change the name and life pattern of the new converts. The Basel Mission worked in Dakshina Kannada, Kodagu, Dharwad and Bijapur districts. To know the local Kannada, Kodava and Tulu languages they wrote and published books in them and evolved Kannada types and started printing in the language. To know the local religions, they studied the classics in Kannada and published them. To help the new converts earn their livelihood, they entered the industrial field and initiated Mangalore tile industry and weaving Khaki by introducing frame looms instead of pit looms. They started schools, introduced Western learning and gave impetus to female education. The Shanti Church they built (1862) at Balmatta in Mangalore was modelled on the Mission House at Basel. In Mangalore they converted the untouchables and the Billavas (toddy tappers).

The Basel Mission Press started (1841) by the efforts of Veigal and Plebst printed the 'Tulu Keertanegalu' in Kannada script in 1841. Moegling started the first Kannada newspaper 'Mangalura Samachara' (1843). They printed books on a variety of subjects like religious works, railway time—table, etc. Konkani works were printed in Kannada script. The experiments they conducted later helped the further growth of Kannada printing by the efforts of others and Attavar Anantachari later evolved beautiful Kannada types called 'Ananta Shades'. Rev. Tziggler, Moegling, Veigal and Kittel rendered yeoman service for the study and research and publication of text books, grammar, dictionary and other scholarly works in Kannada. Veigal published the first history of Kannada literature in 1846 in German language. Rev. Manner published a Tulu dictionary (1886) and Tulu 'paddanas' connected with Bhutha worship in Indian Antiquary Vols. Rev. Kittel's Kannada dictionary was a crowning work (1894). The Basel Mission laid

foundations of Kannada Renaissance by their contributions to education, printing, scientific study of language and literature, writing of lyric poetry and journalism. By criticizing some of the evil practices in the Hindu society like untouchability they indirectly initiated social reforms in Hindu society.